

## OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

301. The residential character and rural atmosphere of Los Altos Hills result primarily from the open space and natural qualities of the area. Presently, significant amounts of open space, from large to small scale, exist within the planning area. Large and intermediate scale open spaces of particular significance are associated with the steeper elevations to the west and south up to the Montebello and Kaiser Ridges. Also, most all individual lots are of sufficient size to allow families to experience significant small scale open space on their own parcels. The character and quality of Los Altos Hills and the balancing effect the planning area provides to the more urbanized areas of the mid-peninsula and the Bay region are dependent upon maximum preservation of existing open space lands at all scales, and enhancement of the natural qualities of developed lands. It is the purpose of this element to define open space policy, delineate open space areas and outline an open space action program.

302. Open space is three-dimensional and most simply can be defined as all of the space above the surface of the earth which is not occupied by structures. In this plan, the many scales and forms of open space are treated as a system of open spaces. Each component of that system has a function in the maintenance of a natural environment that contributes to the quality of human experience. The philosophy of a complex, inter-dependent system of open spaces is basic in this element.

303. To facilitate understanding and for the purpose of planning, the system of open spaces is viewed at three general scales -- very large (macro), intermediate, and small (micro). These general scales of open space are defined as follows:

- a) Macro-Scale Open Space—spaces where the sense of openness is

303.a. (cont.)

extensive; views encompass large undeveloped or primarily undeveloped lands and afford a sense of distance. Continuity and large size give these areas their dominant character

- b) Intermediate Scale open Space -Spaces of intermediate scale range in size from five to thirty (5-30) acres, and range in character from a small totally open area to a large development with extensive landscaping, the unifying element being the sense of openness in the middle ground with definite background limit to one's view.
- c) Micro Scale Open Space -Spaces that are of a small or intimate nature where the observer is intimately confronting limiting structures and is prevented from viewing beyond immediate limits. Attention is usually focused on the details of forms, textures and color of foreground objects.

304.

Within the general three-dimensional open space system are particularly significant open spaces --those related to OPEN SPACE LANDS. These are the open spaces that relate most specifically to the categories of open space lands defined in the State law (Section 655560 of the California Government Code), where open space land is defined as any parcel or area of land or water which is essentially unimproved and devoted to an open space use and which is designated on a local, regional or state open space plan as any of the following:

- a) Open space for the preservation of natural resources, including but not limited to, areas required for the preservation of plant and animal life, including habitat for fish and wildlife species; areas required for ecologic and other scientific study purposes; rivers, streams, lakeshores, banks an rivers and streams, and watershed lands.

- b) Open space used for the managed production of resources, including but not limited to, forest lands, rangeland, agricultural lands and areas of economic importance for the production of food or fiber; areas required for recharge of ground water basins; marshes, rivers and streams which are important for the management of commercial fisheries; and areas containing major mineral deposits, including those in short supply.
- c) Open space for outdoor recreation, including, but not limited to, areas of outstanding scenic, historic and cultural value; areas particularly suited for park and recreation purposes, including access to lakeshores, beaches, and rivers and streams; and areas which serve as links between major recreation and open space reservations, including utility easements, banks of rivers and streams, trails, and scenic highway corridors.
- d) Open space for public health and safety , including, but not limited to, areas which require special management or regulation because of hazardous or special conditions such as earthquake fault zones, unstable soil areas, flood plains, swales and creek channels, watersheds, areas presenting high fire risks, areas required for the protection of water quality and water reservoirs and areas required for the protection and enhancement of air quality.

Objectives:

- 305.
  - 1. To provide for the maximum feasible preservation of open space in and adjoining the Town, with spaces ranging in size from regional scale to small scale open space or individual lots.
  - 2. To protect and maintain those areas necessary to the integrity of natural resources and processes with special emphasis on, but not limited to, the water regime, open spaces vital for wildlife habitat, and other areas of major or unique ecological significance.

3. To preserve open space for the managed production of resources that are suitable in Los Altos Hills, such as agriculture and the maintenance of groundwater supplies.
4. To provide open space for outdoor recreational needs and for the preservation of sites of historical and cultural significance.
5. To preserve the natural beauty and minimize disturbance of the natural terrain and vegetation.
6. To preserve the important vistas, such as Monte Bello, Kaiser, Neary and Ewing Hill Ridges, and the hillsides leading to these ridges.
7. To preserve open space where necessary for the protection of public health and safety.
8. To provide open space to shape and guide development and to enhance community identity.

Principles:

306. 1. The major drainage courses should be kept in a natural condition insofar as possible because of their importance in supplying major vegetation, land forms and wildlife habitat, and storm drainage.
2. The continuance of agricultural pursuits and the maintenance of adequate ground water supplies are to be encouraged.
3. In the context of the local physical situation, the extraction of rock, sand, gravel and mineral resources is incompatible with goals for maintaining a quality environment and should be prohibited.
4. Both public and private efforts should be directed to preserving historical landmarks which have open space value.
5. The basic visual character of the planning area should be conserved in any land development project.
6. To the maximum extent possible, all uses of land and structures in the planning area should be subordinate to the general open space quality of the planning area.

7. The scale of building, the siting of development, the design and the materials of construction should be harmonious with the natural setting.
8. Open spaces, to the extent possible, should be linked together visually and physically to form a system of open spaces.
9. Unstable terrain, active fault traces, water channels, flood plains, and other areas determined hazardous to public welfare and safety or necessary for storm drainage should be kept as open space unless unobtrusive corrective measures can assure public safety and meet public need.
10. Conservation easements, open space zoning, and other land use regulations should be used to prohibit development on unstable terrain, active fault traces, water channels, flood plains, excessively steep slopes and other areas determined hazardous to public welfare and safety.
11. Residents of Los Altos Hills accord the highest value to the Town's open space and recreation areas. These areas, many of which are owned by the Town itself, help supply and preserve the unique character and semi-rural atmosphere of Los Altos Hills, provide important balance to the more densely urbanized San Francisco Bay plain, and provide numerous recreational, scenic, open space, and conservation resources and opportunities for the Town and its residents.

Accordingly, the lands owned by the Town of Los Altos Hills commonly known as Byrne Preserve, Central Drive, Juan Prado Mesa Preserve, O'Keefe Property, Rhus Ridge Properties, Murietta Ridge, Little League Fields on Purissima Road, Westwind Community Barn, and Edith Park shall not be conveyed, sold or abandoned in whole or in part for any purpose, except pursuant to a vote of the Town electorate; provided, however, that this paragraph shall not require a vote

306.11 (cont.) of the electorate for any conveyance by the City of a leasehold, easement, or other property interest in these lands for a use consistent with the property's General Plan designation.

Description:

307. Almost all lands within Los Altos Hills have some open space significance even though some may not specifically meet state open space use criteria. With the majority of its land in wooded mountainside, or rolling oak-studded, grass-covered hills, the Los Altos Hills planning area is an important part of the backdrop to the more densely urbanized Bay plain. The open space proposals of this element are directed at retaining as much of this natural land as possible.

308. Specific open space proposals are related to two categories of open space areas on the Plan Diagram: Open Space Preserve, and Open Space Conservation Area. Specific lands included under these categories meet state open space use criteria. Open space lands, where the primary function is some form of active recreation, are designated "public" or "private recreation area" on the General Plan Diagram and are described in detail in the Recreation Element of this Plan. Specific open space proposals (other than recreation areas), their significance and suggested methods for implementation which combine to form the state-required action program are described below. In addition, historical sites which have open space, recreational, or educational value are described.

309. In formulating this element of the General Plan, Los Altos Hills' Open Space resources have been evaluated in relationship to the state open space guidelines and definitions, and, as appropriate, identified as open space land serving one or more functions outlined in those guide-lines. Those open space lands whose functions are identified as essential for the public interest are proposed for preservation through a variety of methods. including public regulation and/or acquisition.

310. It should be noted that not all lands with significant open space value, whose maintenance may be essential for preservation of the area's atmosphere and character, are necessarily described. Other open lands of various scales exist that the community may feel deserve preservation e.g., open hillsides adjacent to major

310. (cont.) corridors of movement, such as Interstate 280. It is imperative, therefore, that the Town inventory and analyze especially intermediate and micro scale open spaces within the Town and add recommendations to this plan to ensure all land significant to maintenance of community character will be preserved.

1. Open Space Preserve These are generally large areas where inherent characteristics or capabilities of the land are most suitable to open space for preservation of natural resources, open space for less active forms of outdoor recreation, primarily for outstanding scenic qualities. Open space preserves are proposed for extensive areas within the planning area. mountain area, an area of ridges and valleys leading up to and including Monte Bello and Kaiser Ridges to the southwest and south, comprises the largest open space preserve; another large area includes lands within the City of Palo Alto and its sphere of influence which are in the Los Altos Hills planning area, particularly those lands zoned to open space by Palo Alto. In addition to the larger areas, some more intermediate size units of land within the community have also been designated open space preserve.
- a. Mountain Area -The ridge and valley system south of Moody Road, including a majority of the Town's sphere of influence, is essentially formed by drainage in the Adobe Creek, Hale Creek and Permanente Creek Basins and is endowed with a rugged landscape, with slopes much steeper than those found in virtually all the remainder of the planning area. The ridges of the system are parallel, oriented east-west and include Neary Ridge, Kaiser Ridge, Ewing Hill Ridge, Monte Bello Ridge. In addition to steep slopes, geologic hazards (such as landslides, earthquake faults and other areas of extreme relative geologic instability), inaccessibility due to ridge alignment; difficulty in providing water and other services; and fire hazard including limitations to fire equipment response) constrain the areas potential for development. The ridges are also important for their visual qualities visible from many vantage points within the Town and the mid-peninsula sub-region. It is proposed, therefore, that this area be

310.1.a. (cont) maintained essentially in a natural state, with provisions made for development of only emergency roads necessary to assure rapid containment of any fires.

Implementation -It is proposed that the several thousand contiguous acres designated Open Space Preserve south of Moody Road be zoned initially pre-zoned) to an open space use, with low intensity uses allowed. Such uses could be public or private and would rely on the natural setting for the major aspect of the use. Uses might include areas for scientific study, low intensity private recreation, trails and paths, and use as a watershed. Residential development on large parcels, no less than 10 acres, might be permitted under highly controlled conditions. In any residential or development, it is proposed that all aspects be carefully evaluated to ensure the use will have minimal impact on the natural environment and to ensure compliance with objectives of the General Plan. Particularly prominent visual features, such as ridges or hillsides, should be kept free of development or change. Public park uses may be possible through gift or purchase by some agency other than the Town, such as the Mid-Peninsula Park District. The Town should support such efforts.

It has been assumed for many years that the Duveneck ownership would in time be conveyed to the county for park purposes. Such a park would be of great significance to Los Altos Hills. The Town should support the property owner in his efforts to preserve the land. If and when the park development is assured, it is proposed that only a minimum of recreation facilities are provided with the majority of area maintained in a natural condition.

Preservation of Kaiser Ridge, located within the Cupertino Sphere of Influence, will be dependent on Cupertino and Santa Clara County efforts to regulate operation of Kaiser Cement and Gypsum Company. The Town should support Cupertino and the County in these efforts and should keep

- 310.1.a (cont.)      abreast of the quarrying aspects of the Kaiser Gypsum operation to insure that the skyline which has been quarried is rehabilitated.
- b. Byrne Preserve -This naturally beautiful unit of land is currently being purchased by the Town from the Nature Conservancy. It is proposed that the land be preserved as open space with provision for riding, hiking, and other more passive recreational uses.
- c. Fremont Road Site -This 30 acre site on Fremont Road, across from Town Hall, is designated as open space preserve. (It is possible this site may evolve to a community center, including provision for public recreation.) The site is one of the few significant open spaces in this portion of the community and appears important in preserving the sense of openness particularly where it is adjacent to development that is generally of greater relative intensity than in other portions of the Town.
- Implementation -It will probably be necessary for the Town to purchase this site if it is to be preserved as permanent open space.
- d. City of Palo Alto -Those lands within the City of Palo Alto, or which are part of its sphere of influence (e.g., Upper foothills, Foothill Park, Stanford Lands, Esther Clark Park, etc), shown in the Open Space Preserve designation reflect existing zoning or existing policies of Palo Alto. The maintenance of these lands in their natural condition enhances the rural and open character and atmosphere of Los Altos Hills; therefore, their preservation is important to the Town.
- Implementation -The Town should actively support, to the extent possible, the efforts of Palo Alto to preserve these lands.
- d. El Retiro-Redwood Grove (City of Los Altos) -The El Retiro site and Redwood Grove within the sphere of influence of the City of Los Altos, located at the Los Altos Hills Town boundary, north of O'Keefe Lane and west of Adobe Creek, have been designated for acquisition by the City for open space in its General Plan Revision program. These sites are also important open space areas to Los Altos Hills because of their proximity to the Town, located west of Adobe Creek, and because of their scenic

310.1.d (cont.) qualities and ecological and historic significance. For these reasons, they have been designated Open Space Preserves.

Implementation -The Town should take the lead in efforts to maintain these sites as permanent open space, including initiation of discussions with the Santa Clara County Local Agency Formation Commission in regard to placing the El Retiro site in Los Altos Hills' sphere of influence.

- f. Neary Quarry -This site, within the Town's sphere of influence, is designated as an open space preserve based on its function of "managed" production of natural resources. Currently Santa Clara County is responsible for regulation of the quarrying operation; however, since the quarry is a pre-existing use, few controls are levied by the County on the operation. It is anticipated that, when the quarrying operation ceases to exist, the site will be unsuitable for other than open space uses.

Implementation -The Town should encourage the County to establish regulations to control the nuisance factors of the quarry, including noise and dust from trucks which have a negative impact on the surrounding residential areas. In addition, the County, the Town, and the property owner should work together to consider plans for rehabilitation of the site for other uses.

- g. O'Keefe Property – This beautiful area north of Highway 280 along O'Keefe Lane features a number of scenic, conservation, and recreational resources, including two recreational pathways, a magnificent Heritage Oak, and shady creek side thickets which provide shelter for both land animals and pond dwellers.

- h. Rhus Ridge Properties – These three scenic and undeveloped parcels at the intersection of Moody Road and Rhus Ridge Road form the gateway of the Rhus Ridge pathway, which is used by hikers and equestrians for convenient entrance to the Mid-Peninsula Regional Open Space District by way of the highly scenic route to the Windmill Pasture. These parcels also provide a scenic pathway that connects

- 310.1.h (cont.) the off-road trail from Hidden Villa to the Rhus Ridge hiking area and further on to Summit Road.
- i. Juan Prado Mesa Preserve – This site, reached by offroad pathways leading from either Dawson Drive or Stonebrook Drive, is criss-crossed by several off-road pathways and provides a number of scenic, open space, and recreation opportunities for the Los Altos Hills community.
  - j. Murietta Ridge – This 13.9 acre area serves as a valuable open space buffer between Hidden Villa and the Mid-Peninsula Regional Open Space Preserve, and provides a heavily wooded refuge for a variety of mammals, birds, and native plants and trees.
  - k. Central Drive – This narrow, approximately one-acre strip of undeveloped open space land is contiguous with a section of the western boundary of Byrne Preserve and provides similar open space and passive recreational opportunities.
2. Open Space Conservation Areas These are portions of other use areas (e.g. residential and institutional) where structures should not be permitted. Generally, these are steep canyons associated with major creeks or their tributaries (i.e. Matadero, Purissima, Adobe, Hale, and Permanente Creeks), with heavy vegetation cover where, for reasons of conservation of resources, public welfare and visual amenity uses should be limited to low intensity recreational uses. In addition, visually important open spaces helping to define the community character associated with major religious and educational institutional facilities, or with Stanford Industrial Park, are designated open space conservation areas.
- Implementation -It is proposed that these areas be preserved through careful regulation of development combined with conservation easements. An alternative to public ownership of conservation easements may be ownership by neighborhood residents with use limited to low intensity private

310.2. (cont.) recreational activities. Many of the stream canyons, however, are essential as links in the Town's public trails and paths systems.

3. Historical Sites - Listed below are historical sites whose preservation, or recognition as part of any development, will help maintain and enhance the character and sense of open space associated with the community. Some of these sites have already recognized for their historical importance and are registered state historical landmarks. It is proposed, however, that the historical importance of all sites listed be preserved in a manner most appropriate to the individual site.

Ohlone Indian Village Site -(1700's) O'Keefe Lane and El Monte Avenue, Los Altos and Los Altos Hills, Registered Historical Point of Interest, SCI 015.

Indian Spring, (1700's) Magdalena Avenue, permanent year-round source of water, through the Indian period and since.

Indian "Meditation or Look-out" Point, (1700's), La Cresta Avenue, bows and arrows were found behind this seat.

Juan Prado Mesa Adobe Site, (1840's), Summerhill and El Monte Avenues, Historical Point of Interest applied for.

Juana Briones Adobe, (1840's), Old Trace Road, Palo Alto  
M. L. Koenig Residence, (1800's), Old Altos Road.

Indian Villa, (1860's), Moody Road near Los Altos Hills, includes stage stop, blacksmith shop, barn, and olive trees planted by the Padres.

Old Trace Road, (1860's), Fremont Avenue, near Arastradero Road, Palo Alto. Originally trail over which redwood logs were hauled from hills to the bay for shipping.

Moody Road, (1888), petitioned for by G. w. Moody in 1867. Ran from the San Jose-San Francisco Road to the Moody Home. Old Indian trail, lumber road, stage road.

Gardner Bullis Residence, (1870s), Manuela Avenue, original three rooms built during this time.

Frenchmen's Tower, (1874), Old Page Mill Road south of Palo Alto. Built by Peter Coutts for water storage for his cattle farm and racing stable.

310.3. (cont.)

Thomas Wright Home, (1880's), (W. D. Frampton), Magdalena Avenue, built by J. P. Hale for his foreman, Thomas Wright; has undergone many changes.

Captain Merx Home, (1895), (Dubrov), Dori Lane and Robleda. Merx's house, fruit-house, and shed are now individually owned. First school classes were held in the fruit-house, 1901-1922, while the one room Purissima School was being built.

William P. Huth Residence, (1900's), Lennox Way and Burke Avenue, Los Altos Hills. Former owner, Professor Madison of Stanford.

Francis Avidano Home, (1900's), Robleda Avenue, Now the Arthur Atherton home, architecturally unique.

W. K. H. Panofsky Home (1900's), Chapin Road,. Built by a sea captain; architecturally unique.

Willard M. Griffin Home, (1901) , 12345 El Monte Avenue; Griffin,. a ship builder from Maine, built his home in 1901. The carriage house, which now houses the Foothill College Fire Department, was built in 1906, as was the Japanese Shrine situated by the District Offices.

One-room Purissima School, (1902), Chapel in the Hills, Robleda and Duval Way. The first school of the area, used until 1953 for school purposes, then rented out for social gatherings and town meetings. The Town of Los Altos Hills used it for their early meetings. Now owned and operated by the Chapel in the Hills.

Henry F. Dana Home, (John Lohman), South El Monte, now the faculty house on the Foothill Community College Campus.

Cosmo George Morgan "Little Gables", (1910), Stonebrook Avenue, Built by his son: Percy. Later home of William Simrell , founder of Los Altos Hills.

Perry Morgan Mansion,.(1914-1915), (Ford Country Day School),

Stonebrook Avenue. Tudor style house with beaded glass panes and fireplace from Europe. Four stone pieces from the home of Brinsley Sheridan, London, dated 1660 and 1705. Now the Ford Country Day School, owned. and operated by Brent Warner.

Thomas Shumate Residence, (1915), (Happy Hours Nursery School, Viscaino Drive. Now operated by Elizabeth Blodgett as the Happy Hours Nursery School and Hills Elementary School.

Horner-Hill Barn and Silo, (1915), Moody Road, Now the Wendell Arthur E. Fowle Home, (1925), Esperanza Drive. The first honorary

310.3. (cont.)

mayor of Los Altos Hills. Elected to office but died before being seated. Now the Dr. J. W. Pender home.

Dr. C. C. Crane Residence, (1926), (H. D. Winbigler), Fremont Road, the home and water tower are architecturally unique.

Adobe Creek Lodge, (1935), Moody Road. Built as an English Country Estate for Milton Haas, is now the property of David Bellucci.

C. Earl Dawson Residence, (1948), Magdalena Avenue, This beautiful estate carries the name Rancho San Antonio.

Sydney W. Treat Home, (1948), Robleda Avenue. The first mayor of the Town of Los Altos Hills. The home is now owned by the Donald Campbells.

Los Altos Hills Town Hall, 1956), 26379 Fremont Road, the first Town Hall.

Corbetta "Parasol" Home, (1960), Corbetta Lane. Architecturally unique. Composed of three identical structures with scalloped parasols. The first one built as a "party house" to entertain guests. Three years later, the other two were added on to, complete the nine room house, surrounded by a man-made lake.

Implementation. It is proposed that the Town explore the possibility of having existing historically important structures designated as state historical landmarks. Historical sites without structures may have to be purchased if the Town determines that historical significance warrants preservation in a natural state. In any case, the historical significance of all sites should be evaluated prior to development. If the site is found to be of some significance, at the least, provision for historical commemoration should be required as part of development. It is also proposed that the Town Historian, in conjunction with Town officials, establish a program for evaluation and preservation of historical sites .